

up upon them and still running out of things to do, they come up with the purchase of telecommunications equipment. And that basically is what Senator Wickersham's amendment, with a few subtle wording changes to it, does, and it basically strikes the provision that Senator Robinson has in his amendment and substitutes the essence of LB 582. I want you to stop and think how ludicrous an idea this is in this day of trying to promote efficiency in government. We're taking an agency that's outlived its usefulness, wanting to pass a bill that allows them to continue to exist and creates a further duplication of effort. Where we have people like Senator Beutler here who, I think, has been talking over the years about needs to improve efficiencies in government in things like judgeships, in things like water legislation. He's now saying we ought to have, where we have education policy in our state housed in the Department of Education, we have an Education Telecommunications Technology Commission in the Department of Education. We're now to say that the Department of Energy will be the ones that make a decision as to who gets grants or loans in this case to schools, who ought to be passing out this telecommunications equipment will be the Department of Energy, that has no expertise in education policy, no expertise in what type of equipment works the best.

SENATOR CROSBY: One minute.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Their rationale, when I asked them why should Department of Energy be making these decisions, they say, well, if a school district has telecommunications equipment, maybe people won't drive as far, and that was their rationalization. We're going to cut back on gas by buying a bunch of satellites for school districts, it doesn't have anything to do with energy, it has to do with job perpetuation. Now the one thing, and to indicate, Senator Wickersham, I am listening, I listened on the last amendment, you made some sense. The one thing I think...and it's not that big a shock, occasionally that will happen. On this one, you know the one policy argument I think maybe the Legislature does need to decide is whether it's grants or whether it ought to be loans. Now I still come down on Senator Robinson's side on that argument that grants is the way to go. But I think you've developed an argument that may carry some support in here in the area of loans versus grants. But the idea...Department of Energy...

SENATOR CROSBY: Time.